



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 2
290 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NY 10007-1866

SDMS Document



85216

OCT 02 2003

**GENERAL NOTICE LETTER
CERTIFIED MAIL-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**

Kenneth Golder, Chief
Clariant Corp.
4000 Monroe Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28205-7782

RE: Diamond Alkali Superfund Site
Notice of Potential Liability for
Response Actions in the Lower Passaic River, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Golder:

The United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") is charged with responding to the release and/or threatened release of hazardous substances, pollutants, and contaminants into the environment and with enforcement responsibilities under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, as amended ("CERCLA"), 42 U.S.C. §9601 et seq. Accordingly, EPA is seeking your cooperation in an innovative approach to environmental remediation and restoration activities for the Lower Passaic River.

EPA has documented the release or threatened release of hazardous substances, pollutants and contaminants into the six-mile stretch of the river, known as the Passaic River Study Area, which is part of the Diamond Alkali Superfund Site ("Site") located in Newark, New Jersey. Based on the results of previous CERCLA remedial investigation activities and other environmental studies, including a reconnaissance study of the Passaic River conducted by the United States Army Corps of Engineers ("USACE"), EPA has further determined that contaminated sediments and other potential sources of hazardous substances exist along the entire 17-mile tidal reach of the Lower Passaic River. Thus, EPA has decided to expand the Study to include the areal extent of contamination to which hazardous substances from the six-mile stretch were transported; and those sources from which hazardous substances outside the six-mile stretch have come to be located within the expanded Study Area.

By this letter, EPA is notifying Hoescht Celanese Chemicals, Inc. ("Hoescht Celanese") of its potential liability relating to the Site pursuant to Section 107(a) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. §9607(a). Under CERCLA, potentially responsible parties ("PRPs") include current and past owners of a facility, as well as persons who arranged for the disposal or treatment of hazardous substances at the Site, or the transport of hazardous substances to the Site.

In recognition of our complementary roles, EPA has formed a partnership with USACE and the New Jersey Department of Transportation-Office of Maritime Resources ("OMR") ["the governmental partnership"] to identify and to address water quality improvement, remediation, and restoration opportunities in the 17-mile Lower Passaic River. This governmental partnership is consistent with a national Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") executed on July 2, 2002 between EPA and USACE. This MOU calls for the two agencies to cooperate, where appropriate, on environmental remediation and restoration of degraded urban rivers and related resources. In agreeing to implement the MOU, the EPA and USACE will use their existing statutory and regulatory authorities in a coordinated manner. These authorities for EPA include CERCLA, the Clean Water Act, and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The USACE's authority stems from the Water Resources Development Act ("WRDA"). WRDA allows for the use of some federal funds to pay for a portion of the USACE's approved projects related to ecosystem restoration.

For the first phase of the Lower Passaic River Project, the governmental partners are proceeding with an integrated five- to seven-year study to determine an appropriate remediation and restoration plan for the river. The study will involve investigation of environmental impacts and pollution sources, as well as evaluation of alternative actions, leading to recommendations of environmental remediation and restoration activities. This study is being conducted by EPA under the authority of CERCLA and by USACE and OMR, as local sponsor, under WRDA. EPA, USACE, and OMR are coordinating with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the Federal and State Natural Resource Trustee agencies. EPA, USACE, and OMR estimate that the study will cost approximately \$20 million, with the WRDA and CERCLA shares being about \$10 million each. EPA will be seeking its share of the costs of the study from PRPs.

Based on information that EPA evaluated during the course of its investigation of the Site, EPA believes that hazardous substances were being released from Hoescht Celanese's facility located at 354 Doremus Avenue in Newark, New Jersey, into the Lower Passaic River. Hazardous substances, pollutants and contaminants released from the facility into the river present a risk to the environment and the humans who may ingest contaminated fish and shellfish. Therefore, Hoescht Celanese may be potentially liable for response costs which the government may incur relating to the study of the Lower Passaic River. In addition, responsible parties may be required to pay damages for injury to, destruction of, or loss of natural resources, including the cost of assessing such damages.

Enclosed is a list of the other PRPs who have received Notice letters. This list represents EPA's findings on the identities of PRPs to date. We are continuing efforts to locate additional PRPs who have released hazardous substances, directly or indirectly, into the Passaic River. Inclusion on, or exclusion from, the list does not constitute a final determination by EPA concerning the liability of any party for the release or threat of release of hazardous substances at the Site. Be advised that notice of your potential liability at the Site is being forwarded to all parties on this list.

We request that you consider becoming a "cooperating party" for the Lower Passaic River

Project. As a cooperating party, you, along with many other such parties, will be expected to fund EPA's share of the study costs. Upon completion of the study, it is expected that CERCLA and WRDA processes will be used to identify the required remediation and restoration programs, as well as the assignment of remediation and restoration costs. At this time, the commitments of the cooperating parties will apply only to the study. For those who choose not to cooperate, EPA may apply the CERCLA enforcement process, pursuant to Sections 106 (a) and 107(a) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. §9606(a) and §9607(a) and other laws.

Pursuant to CERCLA Section 113(k), EPA must establish an administrative record that contains documents that form the basis of EPA's decision on the selection of a response action for a site. The administrative record files, which contain the documents related to the response action selected for this Site are located at EPA's Region 2 office (290 Broadway, New York) on the 18th floor. You may call the Records Center at (212) 637-4308 to make an appointment to view the administrative record for the Lower Passaic River Project.

EPA will be holding a meeting with all PRPs on October 29, 2003 at 10:00 AM in Conference Room 27A at the Region 2 office. At that meeting, EPA will provide information about the actions taken to date in the Lower Passaic River, as well as plans for future activities. After the presentation, PRPs will be given the opportunity to caucus, and EPA will return to answer any questions that might be generated during the private session. Please be advised that due to increased security measures, all visitors need to be registered with the security desk in the lobby in order to gain entry to the office. In order to ensure a smooth arrival, you will need to provide EPA with a list of attendees no later than October 15, 2003.

EPA recommends that the cooperating parties select a steering committee to represent the group's interest as soon as possible, since EPA expects a funding commitment for the financing of the CERCLA share of the \$20 million study by mid-November 2003. If you wish to discuss this further, please contact Ms. Alice Yeh, Remedial Project Manager, at (212) 637-4427 or Ms. Kedari Reddy, Assistant Regional Counsel, at (212) 637-3106. Please note that all communications from attorneys should be directed to Ms. Reddy.

Sincerely yours,



George Pavlou, Director
Emergency and Remedial Response Division

Enclosure

cc: Anne Conley-Pitchell, Esq.
Hoescht Celanese Corp.

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